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Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Stephen M. Haase

SUBJECT: CVSP EIR PROJECT
ALTERNATIVES

DATE: July 1, 2005

Approved

Date

July 7, 2005

Council District: Citywide
SNI Area All

INFORMATION

PURPOSE

On April 5, 2005, the City Council held a public hearing to accept the third progress report regarding the Coyote Valley Specific Plan which addressed the approach to the CVSP Environment Impact Report (EIR), the potential impact of the CVSP on job growth in North San Jose and Downtown, and the community involvement process for the South Coyote Valley Greenbelt area.

The City Council accepted the third progress report and directed staff to identify the project alternatives to be studied in the EIR and forward them to the City Council, via an informational memorandum.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT ALTERNATIVES

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) states that an EIR shall describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, or to the location of the project, which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project, but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project, and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives. An EIR need not consider every conceivable alternative to a project, but must consider a reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives that will foster informed decision-making and public participation.

In the City's capacity as the lead agency, the Director of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement is responsible for selecting the appropriate project alternatives for examination. Staff has worked with the CVSP Technical Advisory Committee, several project focus groups and the public in order to capture public and agency input on what alternatives (or issues to be considered in the formulation of alternatives) should be considered as part of the CVSP EIR.

Since the last progress report staff has conducted additional public outreach and released the Notice of Preparation (NOP) on June 1, 2005. The comment period for the NOP concludes on July 5, 2005. The EIR team of City staff and David J. Powers and Associates will include any comments not already received into the considerations for the EIR process. As the NOP review process draws to a close, staff felt there was now enough information to create the draft list of EIR alternatives for public distribution.


The range of alternatives in the Coyote Valley Specific Plan EIR will be primarily focused on those alternatives that can avoid or reduce the potentially significant environmental impacts that result from the preferred land use plan. Some alternatives may also be included in response to strong stakeholder sentiment for assessment of alternative project designs not expected to reduce environmental impacts. A draft matrix of the potential alternatives to be analyzed in the EIR is attached entitled "Potential EIR Alternatives". This matrix lists the potential alternatives to be analyzed, identifies the environmental impact that each alternative is intended to eliminate or reduce, and provides a brief summary of the alternative. The final decision on alternatives to be considered in the EIR, and their description, cannot be made until the initial environmental impact analysis has been completed and the project impacts are known and quantified. This will occur during the Administrative Draft EIR stage, prior to the public review of the Draft EIR.

The Environmental Impact Report will also include a discussion of alternatives that were considered, but not further evaluated, because they do not eliminate or reduce a potential significant environmental impact, meet the primary project objectives of the plan, and/or meet the feasibility test for implementing the proposed Coyote Valley Specific Plan. These alternatives may include, but are not limited to, allowing urban development in the South Coyote Greenbelt, switching the location of the Greenbelt with Mid-Coyote, and moving the Urban Growth Boundary northward from Palm Avenue to preclude any future urban development in Mid-Coyote.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, staff is committed to preparing an EIR for the CVSP that has been completed in compliance with CEQA and fully evaluates a reasonable range of project alternatives to the proposed plan. The CVSP EIR will provide the City Council and the public the opportunity to understand the potential environmental impacts of the proposed Coyote Valley Specific Plan, including a comparison with alternatives that may avoid or lessen potentially significant environmental impacts.

This draft alternatives matrix reflects the EIR team's judgment about the alternatives based on the best information currently available. Upon completion of the environmental data collection, analysis and the Administrative Draft EIR, we will verify and modify the alternatives as appropriate. The CVSP EIR is arguably the largest, most challenging EIR the City has ever prepared due to the size and complexity of the proposed project. Staff is very mindful of the need to conduct the EIR process in a professional, complete and timely manner. The EIR team is already well into environmental data analysis particularly for traffic and biology, in order to prepare the ADEIR and circulate the DEIR on schedule.


STEPHEN M. HAASE, DIRECTOR
Planning, Building and Code Enforcement

attachment

Intent of Possible EIR Alternatives		
PROJECT ALTERNATIVE(s)	OBJECTIVE(s)	DESCRIPTION
"No Project" Alternative	The purpose of the "no project" alternative is to allow decisionmakers to compare the impacts of approving the proposed project with the impacts of not approving it. The no project alternative is not the baseline for determining the proposed project's significant environmental impacts.	Required by CEQA Potential impacts from the CVSP would be <u>temporarily</u> avoided Impacts resulting from existing entitlements in North Coyote would not change
Land Use Plan/Infrastructure Alternatives		
<i>No Central Lake Alternative</i>	This alternative is intended to analyze techniques other than the central lake that will mitigate flooding and water quality impacts and to compare cost implications of each.	May result in a net increase in conservation areas for natural biological and riparian habitats A multi-lake approach would potentially increase the water temperatures in the creek systems and impact aquatic habitats
<i>No Internal Transit System Alternative</i>	This alternative would consider the environmental impacts of adding more project vehicle trips to the internal and regional transportation network and reduce core infrastructure costs on private development	May result in an increase in the amount of "in valley" vehicle trips May result in an increase in impervious surface due to need for additional surface and garage parking within the plan area Increase in vehicle trips would add to air quality impacts
<i>Alternate Internal Transit System Alignments</i>	This alternative is intended to analyze other internal transit alignments, technologies, and compare the cost implications of each.	Potentially reduce the proximity of transit stops to residential neighborhoods and result in an increase in the amount of "in valley" vehicle trips May result in an increase in impervious areas due to need for additional surface and garage parking within the plan area Increase in vehicle trips would add to air quality impacts
<i>Maintain Fisher Creek Alignment and incorporate a second reach.</i>	This alternative is intended to analyze the option of enhancing the existing Fisher Creek alignment, with and without adding a second reach in order to deal with flooding and water quality impacts, and analyze cost implications of each.	Flow rates of Fisher Creek could be increased and may result in a higher rate of erosion along the creek's banks A second reach along Fisher Creek may be required for increased flow rate and flood storage capacity, and may result in impacts on existing wetlands This alternative would require permits from the Regulatory Agencies
<i>No Parkway Alternative (Arterial Street Grid System)</i>	This alternative would assess arterial street systems and networks other than the parkway system by analyzing Level of Service (LOS) impacts and other environmental consequences.	Likely result in different traffic LOS within the project Anticipated that all other impacts would remain unchanged from project
"Greenbelt Alliance" Alternative	The "Greenbelt Alliance plan" alternative will analyze alternative project designs including internal transportation flow, flood storage and stormwater impacts, in addition to school locations and student generation numbers proposed by stakeholder groups.	Would combine other individual alternatives into one package including arterial street grid system, no central lake with existing Fisher Creek alignment reconstructed to accommodate flooding, wetland restoration and water quality mitigations Would include alternative project design and land use distribution This alternative would require permits from the Regulatory Agencies
Reduced Scale Alternative		
<i>Reduced Urban Footprint</i>	The "Reduced Footprint" alternative would retain the proposed project on less land area, resulting in higher development densities, etc. and analyze whether significant impacts can be minimized and/or avoided by impacting less land area.	Increased project densities on a smaller urban footprint would potentially preserve more open space, reduce/avoid biological impacts, reduce flooding and water quality impacts, All other impacts from the proposed development of Coyote Valley would likely remain the same, particularly transportation or increase (visual)
<i>Reduced Total Housing Units</i>	The "Reduced Housing Units" alternative will consider the environmental consequences of a reduction in the total number of housing units proposed and whether there would be a possible reduction in the amount of infrastructure required to support a reduced project.	A reduction in the amount of proposed housing units would potentially result in a smaller urban footprint or a lower overall project density, and reduced biology impacts A reduction in the amount of housing would additionally reduce the number of vehicle trips in the planning area and thereby lessen the impacts related to transportation and air quality
<i>Reduced Industrial Development</i>	The "Reduced Industrial Development" alternative will consider whether a reduction in the amount of industrial/office development would reduce the amount of environmental impacts and the amount of infrastructure required to support the planned development, including improvements to Bailey Avenue over-the-hill.	A reduction in the amount of industrial development planned would potentially result in a smaller urban footprint or lower density and potentially reduce biology impacts A reduction in the amount of industrial development should additionally reduce the number of vehicle trips within and outside the planning area (i.e., Highway 101 & Bailey Avenue) and thereby lessen the impacts related to transportation and air quality
<i>Reduced Housing Units and Industrial Development</i>	The "Reduced Housing and Industrial" alternative would cover the same urban footprint as the proposed project; however, the total development would be at a lower density. Overall this alternative would be expected to result in less impacts and require less infrastructure (i.e., sanitary and stormwater treatment, Bailey Avenue over-the-hill, etc.).	This alternative would potentially reduce most significant impacts from the proposed development including less traffic, storm water storage capacity, water quality treatment, infrastructure improvements and potentially avoid impacts to Fisher Creek Impacts to Highway 101 and Bailey Avenue may be reduced or avoided
Job/Housing Balance Alternative		
<i>Job/Housing balance within the Specific Plan area</i>	This alternative would analyze the proposed project with an internal balance between jobs and housing and consider its effects on the overall City as a balanced community and any related transportation impacts.	This alternative would potentially balance the internal vehicle trips and thereby reduce transportation impacts on the regional transportation network (ie, Highway 101) Most other impacts would likely remain constant or increase
<i>Citywide job/housing balance correction</i>	This alternative would analyze the project with a higher range of industrial/office jobs to better achieve the Citywide jobs and housing goals, and assess its effects on the overall City, particularly transportation. This alternative is expected to be similar to the "Reduced Housing Units" alternative.	An increase in the number of project jobs would be expected to increase the amount of external vehicle trips, thereby increasing transportation impacts on the regional and internal transportation networks Most other impacts would likely remain constant or increase
Alternate School Sites	This alternative would consider other school sites and different campus designs and sizes within the project area	This alternative is unlikely to reduce any project impacts and is included to assess the consequences of more typical "suburban" school site standards and designs
Alternative Location Analysis		
<i>Relocating the proposed number of housing units and jobs within the existing City limits and avoid development in Coyote Valley</i>	This alternative would consider abandoning development in Coyote Valley while dispersing the intended development (approx. 26,000 housing units and 50,000 jobs) within the existing City limits.	This alternative would avoid impacts within Coyote Valley such as biology, hydrology, noise, historic and cultural resources, loss of agricultural land, and hazardous materials. Environmental impacts would be transferred to other locations with the City, there would be no "reverse commute" benefits, no decrease in air quality
<i>Relocating the proposed project outside of Santa Clara County</i>	This alternative would avoid impacts within Coyote Valley and most transportation and air quality impacts within Santa Clara County depending on the new location chosen for the development. However, this alternative would not meet the projects goals and objects to accommodate the needed housing and jobs within the City of San Jose.	This alternative would avoid impacts within Coyote Valley such as biology, hydrology, noise, historic and cultural resources, agriculture, and hazardous materials. However, impacts would be transferred on a regional scale, including the transportation and associated air quality impacts

POTENTIAL SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS REDUCED/AVOIDED BASED ON PROJECT ALTERNATIVES*																		
Impact Category Alternative	Land Use	Visual/ Aesthetics	Loss of Agriculture Land	Noise	Hydrology/Water Quality	Geology/ Soils	Hazardous Materials	Transportation/ Circulation	Air Quality	Cultural/Historical Resources	Biological Resources	Public Services	Utilities/Service Systems	Recreation	Mineral Resources	Growth Inducing	Cumulative	Comments
"No Project" Alternative					All impacts are temporarily reduced ("not at this time" alternative)													Required by CEQA
Land Use Plan - "Core" Infrastructure Alternatives																		
No Central Lake																		Other flood control measures will be required (i.e., a series of smaller lakes and/or greenway). This alternative incorporates the <i>Greenbelt Alliance</i> alternative land use plan.
No Transit																		This alternative is not anticipated to result in lessening significant impacts but will provide a basis of analysis to determine benefits of having a public transit system.
Alternate Transit Alignments																		Alternative will consider previously evaluated transit alignments and associated impacts.
Maintain Fisher Creek Alignment and incorporate a second reach.																		This alternative encompasses analysis to consider impacts by maintaining the existing Fisher Creek alignment and incorporates components of the <i>Greenbelt Alliance</i> land use plan.
No Parkway (Arterial Grid System)																		This alternative will consider whether an Arterial Grid Pattern street system would lessen or reduce traffic impacts within the proposed development. This alternative also incorporates components of the <i>Greenbelt Alliance</i> land use plan.
Reduced Scale Alternatives																		
Reduce Urban Footprint (i.e. land area)																		Reduce land area for urban development, provide more open space. The number of proposed housing units and jobs would be consistent with the proposed plan and the City Council's "16" goals and objectives.
Reduce Total Housing Units																		This alternative assumes that residential development would be developed at lower densities while covering the same urban footprint as the proposed plan. This alternative is not attempting to achieve an internal jobs and housing balance.
Reduce Total Industrial Development																		This alternative assumes that industrial development would be built a lower density while covering the same urban footprint as the proposed plan. A reduction in the amount of industrial development may avoid the need for improvements to Bailey Avenue ("over-the-hill") and its associated impacts. This alternative is not attempting to achieve an internal jobs and housing balance.
Reduce Housing Units and Industrial Development																		Although this alternative would potentially reduce the project impacts it would not meet the project objectives for number of housing units and jobs. This alternative may avoid the need for Bailey Avenue improvements ("over-the-hill").
Job/Housing Balance Alternatives																		
Balance Jobs/Housing within Specific Plan																		This alternative is anticipated to capture a higher number of internal vehicle trips and thereby could reduce transportation impacts on the regional system.
Balance Jobs/Housing on a Citywide Level																		This alternative will consider impacts on the internal and regional transit system by increasing the number of proposed jobs in the Coyote Valley to better balance out the City's deficiency in jobs per household and potentially altering regional commute patterns.
Alternative School Sites/Designs																		This alternative is not anticipated to address specific environmental impacts but rather analyze various school locations, school sizes, and school numbers in order to respond to stakeholder concerns.
Alternative Location Analysis																		
Relocate the proposed number of jobs and housing units within the existing City limits.																		This alternative is required to be analyzed under CEQA and will consider eliminating development in Coyote Valley while distributing the proposed number of dwelling units and jobs within the existing City limits (i.e., North San Jose and/or Downtown.
Relocate the proposed project outside Santa Clara County																		This alternative is required to be analyzed under CEQA. It is assumed that this alternative would not meet the project goals and objectives to accommodate the projected growth in San Jose. Additionally, although relocating the project outside Santa Clara County may reduce and/or otherwise avoid impacts in the project area these impacts may be increased in the jurisdiction assumed to accommodate it.

* Based on current information and level analysis prepared to date (7/1/05)

LEGEND